

Message Text

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70

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 DHA-02 /071 W

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R 221020Z DEC 75

FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 678

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINTWC PK

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION'S DECEMBER 19 "BLACK DAY" PROTEST FIZZLES

REF: LAHORE 1374, ISLAMABAD 11491

1. NATION-LDE "BLACK DAY" PROTEST, WHICH OPPOSITION AGREED AT RECENT "NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY CONVENTION" IN LAHORE TO HOLD DECEMBER 19 (LAHORE 1374), FLOPPED IN PUNJAB. THERE WERE NO STRIKES, NO KNOWN PROCESSIONS AND NO REPORTED BLACK FLAG DEMONSTRATIONS. LOCAL PAPERS CLAIM EFFORT MET SIMILAR FATE ELSEWHERE IN COUNTRY.

2. ACCORDING PRESS REPORTS, PROTEST CONSISTED OF LITTLE MORE THAN HANDFUL OF MEETINGS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF PROVINCE WHICH EVOKED SCANTY PUBLIC RESPONSE. ACTIVITY IN LAHORE MAINLY CONFINED TO MEETING AT JAMA'AT-I-ISLAMI HEAD-QUARTERS, REPORTEDLY ADDRESSED BY SEVERAL OPPOSITION LEADERS. OPPOSITION MPASS EXPRESSED TOKEN PROTEST BY WEARING BLACK ARM BANDS ON FLOOR OF PUNJEM ASSEMBLY.

3. ONLY POLICE ACTION REPORTED SO FAR WAS ARREST OF 53 OPPOSITION WORKERS IN LYALLPUR FOR "INDULGING IN ACTIVITIES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PREJUDICIAL TO PUBLIC PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY." HALF OF

THESE WERE PICKED UP FOR DISTRIBUTING "OBJECTIONABLE" POSTERS; THE REST WERE LABELED IN PRESS AS "UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS," INCLUDING SIX ARRESTED FOR MAKING SPEECHES AGAINST GOVERNMENT. (IN JOINT STATEMENT ISSUED AT LAHORE DECEMBER 20, PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADERS CLAIMED LARGE NUMBER OF OPPOSITION POLITICAL WORKERS WERE ALSO "ILLEGALLY" ARRESTED IN SARGHODA, GUJRANWALA, MULTAN, SAHIWAL AND OTHER PLACES IN PUNJAB, AS WELL AS IN PESHAWAR, QUETTA, KARACHI, RAWALPINDI, AND JHELUM.)

4. PRESS REPORTED NEGLIGIBLE SUPPORT FROM STUDENTS, LAWYERS, WORKERS OR OTHER POLITICALLY IMPORTANT URBAN GROUPS. GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED ENGLISH PRESS CLAIMED NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTING THESE GROUPS PUBLICLY DENOUNCED PROTEST IN ADVANCE, DISAVOWING ANY INTENTION TO PARTICIPATE. UCMA REPORTEDLY ATTACKED OPPOSITION IN

JUMA KHUTBAS (FRIDAY CONGREGATIONAL SERMONS), CLAIMING "BLACK DAY" PROTEST WAS "INJURING RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS OF PEOPLE."

5. COMMENT: OPPOSITION FAILURE TO CARRY OUT PROTEST EFFECTIVELY WAS PREDICTABLE, GIVEN CONTINUING DISARRAY OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT FORCES. PAK TIMES EDITORIAL DECEMBER 21 ACCURATELY LABELED PROTEST A "FIASCO," EMPHASIZING OPPOSITION'S INABILITY TO ATTRACT PUBLIC SUPPORT. OPPOSITION'S FAILURE ALSO RESULT OF "SECTION 144" ORDINANCES RESTRICTING PUBLIC ASSEMBLY AND MASSIVE DEPLOYMENT OF SECURITY FORCES.

6. CONGEN OFFICER VISITING POLICE HEADQUARTERS ON UN-RELATED BUSINESS DAY BEFORE PROTEST CHANCED TO OVERHEAR TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN TOP POLICE OFFICIALS INVOLVING CONCENTRATION OF POLICE RESERVE FORCES IN VARIOUS PARTS OF PROVINCES, JUST ONE ELEMENT OF ELABORATE PRECAUTIONS GOVERNMENT TOOK TO CONTAIN POSSIBLE DEMONSTRATIONS. SEVERAL PROMINENT OPPOSITIONISTS, WHOM WE ENCOUNTERED IN SPATE OF WEEKEND WEDDING PARTIES, COMPLAINED BITTERLY ABOUT OFFICIAL SUPPRESSION OF PROTEST DAY HOPES. ONE (SON-IN-LAW OF ALLAMA IQBAL) SAID SO MANY FSF TROOPS WERE DEPLOYED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OUTSIDE MAIN MOSQUES THAT PEOPLE WERE GENERALLY INTIMIDATED FROM VOICING PROTEST PUBLICLY FOLLOWING FRIDAY PRAYERS (WHICH IS USUALLY PRIME TIME).

7. OPPOSITION THUS CONTINUES TO FIND ITSELF BOXED IN. HAVING CHOSEN TO BOYCOTT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND START "MOVEMENT" TO CONFRONT GOVERNMENT IN STREETS, OPPOSITION

FINDS IT LACKS INTERNAL STRENGTH AND PUBLIC SUPPORT
NECESSARY TO DO SO.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LAHORE01456
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750444-0792
From: LAHORE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751219/aaaaaqsn.tel
Line Count: 118
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 LAHORE 1374, 76 ISLAMABAD 11491
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 AUG 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <21 AUG 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OPPOSITION'S DECEMBER 19 "BLACK DAY" PROTEST FIZZLES
TAGS: PINT, PK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006